Also by Mark Canada

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CHAPTER 4

THE TRUE, THE FALSE, AND THE "NOT EXACTLY LYING"

MAKING FAKES AND TELLING STORIES IN THE AGE OF THE REAL THING

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IT WAS THE AGE OF THE REAL Thing. Americans in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were famously smitten with science, enchanted by facts, hungry for authenticity, and preoccupied with realism, which, as one cultural mandarin wrote in 1887, had become "the state of mind of the nineteenth century. It affects the poet, fictionist, humorist, journalist, essayist, historian; the religionist; the philosopher; the natural scientist; the social scientist; the musician, the dramatist, the actor, the painter, the sculptor." This was the era, as many scholars have argued, when American culture took a decided turn away from idealism and romanticism and strove to see, represent, and embrace the world *as it truly was.*[1]

But it was also the age of the "fake." Americans in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries may have been reading Stephen Crane and mulling Herbert Spencer, gazing at Winslow Homer and scrutinizing Jacob Riis, and replacing their antimacassared armchairs with the stern seats of Stickley, but many were *also* preoccupied with the exact opposite of the real, and not *merely* to disapprove of it. It was at this high tide of America's romance with facts that the word *fake* itself emerged from the

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netherworlds that had previously been its main habitat to become a part of the public discourse.[2]

And it was the newspaper, the institution that had long ago established itself as the public's preeminent source for the truthful portrayal of the contemporary world, that was the instigator and main subject of the discourse about faking. As old journalistic customs confronted new modes of scientific observation and inquiry, new ideas about the relationships between citizens and politics, new competition from novelists who were claiming similar terrain, new technological possibilities, and new economic structures, many journalists found themselves rethinking the most basic assumptions about how facts worked, about how reporters established their credibility, about the relationship between language and reality, about the very role of journalism, all with the goal of building descriptions of the world that felt more true to life.[3]

In this complicated new world where all the rules for both fact and fiction were under reconsideration, some journalists briefly found their own potential for being what they saw as even *truer* to life in the practice one of them defined as "not exactly lying." But the debate over its propriety that was carried out both within and beyond the profession, the migration of the term into dozens of other arenas ranging from prize fighting to dairy farming, the precipitous decline into ignominy it endured, and the contrapuntal flourishing of the similarly problematic term *story* around the same time all offer intriguing insights into evolving understandings about exactly how to tell the truth in print about the world of the real.

FAKING DEFINED

The first journalists to talk about *faking* saw it as an insider's term. Its use was almost entirely confined to the nascent professional press, and it was usually sequestered inside quotation marks, emphasizing its strangeness as a bit of slang with a special meaning that ordinary folks could not be trusted to understand without expert guidance. The special meaning—faking "is not exactly lying."

Or so it was described in the monthly *Writer* magazine. Founded by William H. Hills in 1887, *The Writer*, the first significant periodical entirely devoted to the craft, claimed in its subtitle an expansive mission: "to interest and help all literary workers." But although the magazine welcomed everyone from preachers to novelists into that category, Hills, who was on the editorial staff of the *Boston Globe*, was clearly most interested in scrutinizing and guiding the yeasty world of journalism. There were

tips on how to do an interview and how not to be sued for libel, advice about wearing eyeshades and preserving clippings, genteel battles over whether a reporter should use a typewriter and whether a female editor should be called an *editress*. In an article in the magazine's third number on varieties of journalistic style, Hills tossed off a casually appreciative reference to a kind of New York newspaper that requires a reporter to "be able to 'fake' brilliantly to do the work well. He must be a skilful romancer, and it will not hurt him any to be a poet. . . . He must have a brilliant imagination, a Niagara flow of language, and a vivid way of using words. . . . His style must have the quality of the French *feuilleton* writer and the snap of a Rocky Mountain stage-driver's long-lashed whip."[4] And five months later, in one of the very earliest published efforts to define and explicate the phenomenon of faking as it applied to journalism, Hills seemed delighted to explain to "the uninitiated moralist" why the practice of "not exactly lying" was no mere garden-variety hackery—in fact, no hackery at all. It applied to a very specific practice: "the supplying, by the exercise of common sense and a healthy imagination, of unimportant details, which may serve an excellent purpose in the embellishment of a dispatch. It differs from lying in this delicate way: the main outline of the skillfully 'faked' story is strictly truthful; the unimportant details, which serve only the purpose of making the story picturesque, and more interesting to the reader, may not be borne out by the facts, although they are in accordance with what the correspondent believes is most likely to be true."[5] Hills's breezy approach doubtless beguiled many readers into believing that faking was a harmless, even admirable practice ill served by its disreputable name. The point was to fill in any gaps that might have opened either in the dramatic appeal of the story or in a careless reporter's notes; to give a story color, interest, and charm; and to render newspapers more interesting and readable. Besides, everyone did it; it was "an almost universal practice, and . . . hardly a news despatch is written which is not 'faked' in a greater or less degree." It all seemed jolly fun. As an "experienced correspondent" was quoted as saying, "I hate to lie, but I love to 'fake.'"[6]

The "picturesque little details" that Hills offered as examples looked innocuous enough. A reporter following a story about the sober university professor who was fascinated into eloping with a young girl, for instance, might reasonably feel that "it doesn't do any serious harm to describe her as 'a bright and charming brunette of sixteen,' etc., etc.—we all know the 'faker's' phrases,—although, in reality, she might be a washed-out blonde of twenty-three." Readers would like it, and since they would never know

the difference anyway, nobody would be hurt. It would simply be giving them the story they wanted and expected.[7]

Yet after painting this appealing picture of creative reporters and entranced readers, Hills did get down to wagging his finger, or at least wiggling it a little, navigating carefully between the duty of *The Writer* to set professional standards and his evident sympathy for any writer struggling to turn in a good story. Faking, he cautioned, was dangerous. For one thing, it was hard to do well; "the ordinary newspaper writer cannot 'fake' successfully," he said, and "the skilful 'faker' . . . is in danger of going beyond the bounds of probability, and of making it evident that he is not keeping to the facts." Since, he warned, the "experienced telegraph editor is quick to see when a correspondent is 'faking' immoderately" (the qualifying adverb is telling) and was unlikely to keep using material from any reporter suspected of faking, then "purely as a matter of business, it does not pay to 'fake' habitually or extensively. The man who has an itching desire to do that sort of thing, and an in-born consciousness that he can do it well, can make more money and a better reputation as a writer of legitimate fiction." It's best not to fake at all, Hills advised his readers, but "if you must 'fake' sometimes, use all the good sense and self-restraint that nature has given you."[8]

So by the end of the piece Hills's message was clear: faking, while fun, wasn't quite *comme il faut*. But the potential victim was also clear: not the reader, or the public trust, or society, or democracy; it was the *reporter*. A working editor who had taken on himself the task of defining an emerging profession was telling his readers that the real danger of shading the truth wasn't that it was unethical but that it might get them fired.

Other trade publications were equally indulgent about the practice. In 1886 *The American Bookmaker*, a journal "of technical art and information" about printing and typesetting, inducted its readers into the secrets of newspaper terminology and practice as if to a fraternity handshake. It defined faking in this way: "to cook up a story without materials, its excellence consisting in the interest and resemblance to truth which can be imparted to it. Very important journals sometimes do this. For instance, nearly all of the details in the accounts of the President's wedding trip to West Virginia [i.e., western Maryland] lately were 'faked.' Had they been true the different statements would have agreed with each other."[9] Here reporters seemed to have been not just embellishing the facts they had gathered but actually creating facts of their own, though even those had to bear a noticeable "resemblance to truth." Faking was even slipping into the first dawning of a journalistic curriculum. In 1894, more than a

dozen years before the University of Missouri established America's first stand-alone school, Edwin L. Shuman, a reporter and editorial writer for the *Chicago Evening Journal*, was inspired by his experience teaching a Chautauqua journalism course to write a handbook for young journalists. Like Hills, he cautioned his readers that the fake was hazardous, "an edged tool" that could "wound fatally even the most skillful operator." Yet again like Hills he seemed tranquil in his acknowledgement that the practice was not only ubiquitous and inevitable but also beneficial—just what the public wanted. "This trick of drawing upon the imagination for the non-essential parts of an article is certainly one of the most valuable secrets of the profession. . . . Truth in essentials, imagination in non-essentials, is considered a legitimate rule of action in every office. The paramount object is to make an interesting story. If the number of copies sold is any criterion, the people prefer this sort of journalism to one that is rigidly accurate." No one wanted reporters to "fall into the dull and prosy error of being tiresomely exact about little things," Shuman concluded, "like the minutes and seconds or the state of the atmosphere or the precise words of the speaker. A newspaper is not a mathematical treatise."[10]

FAKING DEFENDED

For some fakers, the highest rewards of the practice were earthbound; it could fatten the pay envelope. Newspapers in this period commonly hired reporters "on space" rather than for a regular salary, which meant that what they were paid depended entirely on how many column inches of their copy made it into the paper. So a reporter might exhaust himself chasing a dozen leads all over town and still end up with empty pockets for the week if none of his stories passed muster with the editor. Canny reporters quickly learned to cram their copy full of the sort of piquant detail that would survive even the sharpest blue pencil, while equally canny press critics argued for the abolition of the space system as a giant first step toward improving journalism. "The space-writer finds it to his advantage to string out his subject by any possible artifice," grumbled the editor of a dignified literary magazine. "Every incident that can by any possibility be tortured in a sensational direction is distorted . . . [it] is not really to the advantage of the space-writer to adhere carefully to bare facts."[11]

But also clear in the late 1880s and early 1890s is the suggestion that faking could be an aesthetic pleasure and that, like the "experienced correspondent" quoted by Hills in 1887, some reporters just "love[d] to fake." It could be, simply, an escape from boredom, whether it was

the journalists who were bored or their material that was boring. Many of the young men and women who had entered journalism looking for adventure or drama or novelty were dismayed to discover that what they actually had to do every day was crushingly humdrum. Local reporters on small-town papers faced the "overwhelming" challenge of filling five columns a week in places so dull, orderly, and newsless that, as Charles Edward Russell recalled of his apprenticeship on his father's paper in Davenport, Iowa, the arrival of a steamboat or the issuance of a new railroad timetable could be cause for rejoicing. Faking could repair the unbearable banality of reality.[12]

At the same time, some of the most eminent city papers had been moving decisively toward a kind of neutral, uninflected writing that young writers with literary ambitions—and there were many—often found irksome. In the 1890s Lincoln Steffens chafed at editor E. L. Godkin's mandate that *Evening Post* reporters "were to report the news as it happened, like machines, without prejudice, color, and without style; all alike." And long after Julius Chambers had gone on to lustrous careers as both a journalist and a novelist, he was still grumbling about the harm done to his talent by his first job in journalism, way back in 1870. The *New York Tribune* had employed a style "accurately described by John Hay, then a paragraph writer on the *Tribune*, as 'The Grocer's Bill,'" he complained in his posthumously published reminiscences. "Facts; facts; nothing but facts. So many peas at so much a peck; so much molasses at so much a quart. . . . It was a rigid system, rigidly enforced."[13]

For the ambitious, for the desperate, or for that aspiring novelist with the half-finished manuscript in the bottom drawer, the temptation to break loose with some personal or creative gesture must sometimes have been irresistible and, even better, the possible consequences mild. Even Russell, whose 1914 memoir included a sharp denunciation of faking, confessed that his old Davenport newspaper had occasionally resorted to using a story from an exchange paper with the names changed—something he *could* have chosen to call a fake rather than dismissing it, as he did, as a "sheer and perhaps clumsy invention."[14]

Pulling off a good fake offered other satisfactions to the reporter. It produced stories that readers noticed and liked. It reinforced reporters' sense of belonging to a select band with special skills and special privileges. It gave them a competitive arena with no holds barred where they could impress and (ideally) outdo rival papers or even their own colleagues. Grizzled old-timers who insisted that they had foresworn faking would nonetheless fondly recall the great fakes of their youth and pass on

the stories to their successors as if they were founding myths. After a long day covering a mild and unproductive little anarchists' rally, as William Salisbury recorded in his memoir, the reporters sitting around the *Chicago Tribune* office plopped their feet on their desks and reminisced about "the hot times in the old days" of the Haymarket trials. They kept public excitement boiling even during lulls in the action, one veteran newsman recalled, with "all kinds of rumors" of plots and threats, but "the best faking in the anarchist days—" he went on, "the most artistic—was done by Dickson. . . . He got more scoops out of the cells of the condemned than anybody."[15]

It wasn't just reporters, either, who enjoyed a good fake. Faking could also drive up a paper's circulation, and while protocol required that editors officially frown on the practice, many let it be known, tacitly but unmistakably, that a story written with imagination and verve would not be taken amiss. During his brief stint on the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* in 1892–93, the young Theodore Dreiser was assigned to write the regular "Heard in the Corridors" column that was supposed to have been based on interviews with guests at the various hotels in town. "One could write any sort of story one pleased,—romantic, realistic or wild," he later recalled, "and credit it to some imaginary guest at one of the hotels, and if it wasn't too improbable it went through without comment. It was not specifically stated by the management that the interviews could be imaginary," Dreiser went on, but the assistant city editor tipped him that the previous columnist "never tried to get actual interviews except once in a while," and Dreiser's own inventions soon won him a permanent assignment to the column. After being caught faking some theater reviews on a busy night, he fled the *Globe-Democrat* in a spasm of righteous remorse and moved over to the *St. Louis Republic*. There his fertile imagination again earned him acclaim and a steady assignment, this time covering baseball—and he eventually found that those faked reviews for the *Globe-Democrat* had been greeted with nothing more than hearty and sympathetic laughter by his colleagues.[16]

The journalistic fake was even recognizable enough to serve as a genially comic plot device in fiction. In a short story published in *Harper's Weekly*, the "Young Reporter" chivvied an older colleague for what he called a fake story involving a bear, a bicycle, and a handful of ball bearings, accusing him of "making journalism a byword and a reproach." But when the "Old Reporter" explained that his story had actually "tone[d] . . . down" an even more elaborate and incredible incident on the theory that "it is not so much the things which a man puts in as the things which he leaves out

that makes a successful reporter," the callow youth looked at his colleague with new respect.[17]

SPEAKING OF FAKING

Journalistic embellishment, exaggeration, and fictionalization were, of course, nothing new for newspaper readers by the time Hills and his colleagues came along. Nor was the term *fake* unfamiliar to American ears. It *was* something new, however, that the practice was being named and discussed at all. And it was paradoxical that some journalists were launching their convivial discussion about the pleasures of faking at exactly the same time that others were opening a serious conversation about the duties, responsibilities, and standards of what was being seen for the first time as the *profession* of journalism.

For much of the nineteenth century, newspapers were only partly about "news," and nobody would have expected that everything appearing in one was factually accurate. Newspapers, especially local ones, which made heavy use of secondhand items copied from bigger papers and which had traditionally served as their readers' first or only regular encounters with print, had always had a dog's-breakfast feel about them, indiscriminately mingling intelligence about actual events near and far with poetry, fiction, homilies, travelers' letters, social notes, and jokes. And while those items were usually easy to categorize, others required careful evaluation.

Many papers indulged, knowingly or not, in hoaxes and tall tales. Dan De Quille, who once showed the ropes to the tenderfoot reporter Mark Twain, continued for decades to tickle gullible easterners with his accounts of seven-foot mountain alligators and eyeless hot-water fish. And one Joe Mulhatton, not a journalist at all but an ingratiating salesman with a fertile imagination, earned a certain notoriety as a "gorgeous and ornamental prevaricator" who planted so many tall tales about fallen meteors, treasure caves, and detached sunspots in papers across the country that when reports began circulating that he had died, canny newspapers covered themselves by hinting that the death notice itself might be another hoax. Practical jokes not infrequently wandered into print: as William Salisbury recalled, in his very first days on the job as a superabundantly energetic cub, his older and lazier rivals planted fake news notes for him, and "Patrolman Smith shot a mad dog in the West End while it was running eastward yesterday" actually slipped past his careless editor and into the *Kansas City Times*. And even the soberest paper was known to indulge in the occasional *jeu d'esprit*, as the *New York Tribune* did with its bizarre half-credible, half-frolicsome report of the burning of Barnum's Museum in 1865. Thus readers had become accustomed to papers that one week highlighted the president's message and the next a sentimental tale of the drunkard's redemption, and that claimed neither more nor less expertise in evaluating the latest weird natural phenomenon from the west than any of their own subscribers did. Readers understood that any encounter with a newspaper required them to continually monitor and readjust their assumptions about the authenticity and usefulness of what they were reading—that accurate news truthfully presented was just one category out of many that a newspaper might contain.[18]

Yet while the kind of *un*truthful embellishment Hills described was scarcely novel, what *was* unprecedented was that he was describing it in the first place. Reporters had never talked much before, or probably even thought much before, about exactly what they did, how they did it, and why. Reporters hadn't even been around very long; the figure known as the American reporter had been born only in the 1830s, a product of the ongoing transformation of journalism from a partisan argument among party-funded editors into a generally independent, enterprising, and commercially valuable information system. The new entrepreneurial journalism was unleashing new values, new competitive pressures, and new public expectations along with those new agents who were sallying forth, pencils in hand, into the streets, the courts, the ballrooms, and the battlefields to *find things out.*

A seedy lot they often were, too, those first generations of reporters. Just about the only thing that distinguished them from everyone else—other than that they were seen at best as busybodies, at worst as snoops, and that by most accounts they possessed a legendary capacity for beer—was that they claimed to *be* reporters. No special training was required to become one, and in fact the relatively independent and adventurous life of the journalist was a magnet for the scruffy, the footloose, and the anticonventional, while the work itself was not so much *un*conventional as nearly convention free. No recognized professional organizations or associations set standards or encouraged ethical norms. No generally accepted principles governed the publication of anonymous quotations or the limits of undercover reporting; no weight of tradition steered reporters toward the inverted pyramid or the anecdotal lead; no standardized credentials or press passes gave them leave to slip into crime scenes or committee meetings; and not many ordinary citizens, if stopped on the street and asked whether a public figure had any obligation at all to answer a question from a reporter, would have responded with an unequivocal "yes."

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, a sense of professional self-awareness was glimmering in the grime. Many journalists were joining members of other emerging professions and disciplines like law, medicine, social work, and librarianship in the widespread effort to identify, organize, and control the distinctive bodies of knowledge and codes of behavior that set them apart from ordinary people. Averse as they were to regulation both temperamentally and Constitutionally, journalists never quite kept pace with the lawyers and the doctors in some of the classic indicators of professionalism, such as establishing credentialing procedures, educational requirements, or enforceable codes of conduct. For some—but certainly not all—journalistic organizations, however, another aspect of the professionalization project was increasingly appealing: the use of special modes of inquiry that were different from what untrained people did, modes that were generally characterized as objective, empirical, informational, and rooted in the scientific method.[19]

Another way that evolving professions identified and defined themselves involved talking about themselves—that is, creating handbooks, textbooks, or journals written by professionals for fellow professionals. So when journalists did bring the topic of faking into the emerging conversation about who they were, the assurance that *The Writer* and other such publications were safe havens where insiders talked only to insiders may explain why they chose to deploy a word that at that point was associated almost entirely with louche company. In thieves' cant, *fake* embraced ingenious knavery of all sorts, from "faking a screw" (shaping a skeleton key) to "faking a pin" (injuring one's own leg for sinister purposes), and it was used around the kennel and the barn to describe illicit dye or clip jobs done on horses, show dogs, or even chickens to disguise their flaws. The term was also flourishing in the theater, where an actor who forgot his lines and "supplied the deficiency by words of his own immediate creation" was teased by his fellow troupers, not unsympathetically, as a faker. While it was the world of the stage, not the gamier purlieus of scheming invalids and doctored dogs, that was generally credited with inspiring the journalists to adopt the term as their own, even that world carried the sort of bohemian air that journalists would have found especially congenial.[20] Thus, like the swaggering drunk who insists *he* could be trusted to handle the hooch, journalists were telling each other in their safe journalists-only retreats that while the ordinary citizen and "uninitiated moralist" might not get it, they themselves understood perfectly well that "faking" was just another trick of the trade.

They knew better, however, than to make that point too vigorously in public. When they were addressing nonjournalists rather than yarning with their feet up, practitioners and advocates of faking tended to emphasize its utility, insisting that it actually made them better reporters, while quietly eliding its more freewheeling aspects. As a former news editor at the United Press wire service explained in 1894 in the widely read general-interest *Lippincott's* magazine, faking was a "legitimate and almost necessary" tactic, an ingenious way to cover a late-breaking story in detail and on deadline. Four years earlier, for instance, when the daughter of Secretary of State James G. Blaine inconsiderately scheduled her wedding to begin at two o'clock, just an hour before most afternoon newspapers had to close their final editions, reporters were sent the day before the great event to interview the family, the florist, and the dressmaker and had most of the story written 18 hours before the first guests arrived. Journalists simply had to take care, the UP editor cautioned, not to fall into the grievous error perpetrated by the New York news staff that had energetically and accurately collected all the details about a pending grand society wedding except for the most basic one and leapt into print with an elaborate account of "today's" nuptials a day before the ceremony actually took place.[21]

Sometimes journalists justified their fakery as a way to avoid the "unpardonable sin" of being scooped, which they presented as even more of a disaster for their news-hungry readers than for their own reputations. A 1901 column in another general-interest magazine quoted (or, possibly, faked an interview with) an ex-newspaper man who recalled the great tornado that, five years earlier in St. Louis, had knocked down all the telegraph wires and made it impossible for his distant paper to get any eyewitness accounts of the disaster. So his paper got hold of a man who "knew St. Louis and knew tornadoes by previous experience" to fake some details that felt true, and "the dear public read it with great gusto." Most reporters, the ex-newspaper man insisted, were as honest as anyone else and preferred not to write "fiction," but they also understood what their business required. "Better a thousand fakes to your discredit," he concluded, "than one beat."[22]

In both the professional press and the public mind, faking was closely associated with a journalistic tool that has now been accepted as one of the most basic and effective in the reporter's arsenal. In the nineteenth century, however, the interview was widely despised. A common complaint at the time, and one that has since received a great deal of attention from historians, was that the interview represented an unjustifiable intrusion

into private life, a repellent expedient hatched by nasty busybodies and soulless snoops. But that wasn't the only objection. Interviews were also seen as, literally, incredible: there was no way, after all, of confirming that a given interview was authentic and no reason to trust what a reporter said anyway. It would be "ludicrous," grumbled a popular columnist for *Harper's Monthly*, to "quote a gentleman or lady as holding certain opinions because of a reported conversation printed in a newspaper."[23]

Ludicrous indeed, at least if you believed the many protests by such figures as the Rev. Charles Sheldon, whose madly popular novel *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* catapulted him to the 1896 equivalent of rock-star status. "I have never," he wrote in *The Outlook*, "except once, to a reporter from my own home paper, been interviewed by a reporter for publication in a daily paper, and yet scores of supposed interviews have been published in daily papers." The same thing happened to other eminent men, too, he wrote; a politician friend of his was angry that he had been "reported as saying things he never said, and the 'interviews' were written, anyway, by 'enterprising' reporters, who must have so much matter daily for their papers."[24]

Reporters, however, contended that the fault lay not with the interviewer but the interviewee—with the amateurs, not the professionals. As a journalist named John Arthur argued in *The Writer* in 1889, "in nine cases out of ten" when a subject repudiates a published interview, "he lies. He doesn't like the look of what he has said, when he sees it in cold print." That was why, Arthur continued, if a man absolutely refused to be interviewed, then "no scruples of conscience keep me from obtaining my information through a third party, and 'faking' my interview accordingly." He even assured his nervous reader that such a response would not be "in any manner debasing his manhood."[25]

THE BACKLASH

The heyday of the journalistic fake was brief.

Almost from the moment the word first emerged there had been murmurings in both the professional and the general press against the whole idea, and those murmurings only grew louder and more intense. *The Writer* itself embodied the changing climate of opinion. After running John Arthur's article, for instance, the magazine had quickly alerted potential interview-fakers that their manhoods might not be safe after all; the very next issue carried a rebuttal by a journalist who called Arthur's remarks "astounding." Faking, he spluttered, "is but an agreeable

synonym for 'lying,' much as 'embezzlement' is a euphonism [sic] for 'stealing,'" and its prevalence was giving the press a bad name. Reporters must remember, he continued, that they have "no special ethical privileges or excuses. A reporter is a man (or woman) and has a soul, for which he is responsible."[26]

And seven years after editor Hills had chortled in print over the faked story of the charming brunette, he was publicly embracing the side of righteousness and denouncing Edwin Shuman's handbook for young journalists for its "bad advice" about faking. The practice may be legitimate in Shuman's notoriously freewheeling hometown of Chicago, wrote Hills (a Bostonian) in his 1894 review of the book, "but it is not so in the offices of the best newspapers throughout the country. . . . There are plenty of reporters everywhere who think that it is smart to 'fake,' but they are frowned upon by the best workers in the profession. . . . Nine times out of ten the reporter who 'fakes' details does so only because he is too lazy, or has not enough ability, to gather up the facts." Shuman got the message, too. His next book, *Practical Journalism*, which appeared in 1903, included a caution that could have been responding to Hills's very words: "The reporter who imagines it is smarter to 'fake' a story than to work hard and get the facts will fall by the wayside. Success follows the man whom a lie can not deceive and who scorns to resort to deception himself." (Shuman's most enduring legacy still embodies his mixed message: to this day his name is attached to a long string of prizes awarded by the English department at Northwestern, his alma mater, some of which honor essays or theses while others recognize fiction.)[27]

Now it was always someone *else* who faked. After the Western Associated Press broke its ties with the parent New York organization and established itself in Chicago as an independent corporation, its former partners in the original AP delighted in exposing it as an inveterate faker. The country press faked more often than the city press, said city papers; the British press faked more egregiously than the American press, said American papers; it was *other* papers that fell for the faked report, said *this* paper; it was in my youth that I myself faked, said the reformed veteran.[28]

The tipping point in the life of the fake, the moment when the word visibly crossed the border between excusable and dodgy, seems to have come with the eruption of the ruthless circulation war between Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* in 1895–96. Critics saw plenty to complain about in what was becoming known as the "yellow press": the constant upward spiral of sensationalism; the fat Sunday editions crammed with gossip, fiction,

comics, crusades, and crime; the shrieking banner headlines and gaudy illustrations; the pandering to proletarian taste; the brazen manipulation of public opinion. But in the eyes of many people, the yellow papers also seemed so cavalier about accuracy, so fond of embellishment and invention, and so unwilling to let the facts stand in the way of a good story that the label *faker* embodied a perfectly satisfactory summation of its worst evils and *fake* an acceptable synonym for *yellow*.

Throughout the lamentable episode of the Spanish American War, for instance—which the Hearst press did not, of course, actually ignite on its own, though it obviously had a wonderful time covering it—the mainstream press flung the accusation with abandon and fury both. And even during the first few days after the shooting of President McKinley, when he was responding to treatment and seemed likely to recover, the sensational press "contained columns, double-leaded and scare-headed, about the 'agony' and the 'torture' which the President was bravely bearing, all pure 'fake,'" complained the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Apparently "the possibilities for the 'fake' in yellow journalism were too many to be ignored." In 1903 an encyclopedia entry on journalism gallantly tried to point out that while the yellow press was undeniably sensational, "it is not right . . . to describe as a 'fake' everything that is connected with so-called 'yellow' journalism." But in that four-letter word the nonyellow press had found what it needed—a pithy and evocative description of the distance between itself and its increasingly embarrassing cousins—and the gallant message was doomed.[29]

Thus, by the late 1890s, within a decade or so of the first appearance of the term in the professional press, hardly anyone was willing to publicly embrace faking as a harmless caprice or a nimble trick; hardly anyone was granting it the indulgent nudges and winks that had greeted its first years of life. In fact, as the word *fake* peregrinated out from the professional journals into the general discourse about journalism, everything about it was shifting and taking on a darker tone. No longer confined to describing cases of imaginative embellishment, innocent or otherwise, it now applied to a whole roster of outright trumpery, promiscuously serving as the word of choice for almost any journalistic ill. And because there were so many journalistic ills to describe—so much public dismay over what was widely seen as a sloppy, sensational, inaccurate press—the word got a workout.[30]

Journalistic practices condemned as "fake" were lambasted in the professional and general press alike, in publications ranging the full spectrum from the illustrated *Successful American* magazine to the

200-for-a-sawbuck socialist pamphlet. The term could refer to business practices from the tacky—the use of contests, coupons, giveaways, and premiums to boost circulation—to the crooked, as when drummers sold bogus newspaper subscriptions they never intended to honor. Or it meant the telegraph editors' habit of running long, prolix stories in the paper as if they had come verbatim (and at searing expense) over the wire. Or it was the sordid specialty of such supposedly artless provincial places as Sioux Falls, South Dakota, a favorite haunt of entrepreneurial hacks who would claim to be getting their intelligence by courier from Bad Axe Creek, the Black Hills, or other romantic locations safely beyond the reach of the telegraph, where anything *might* happen and no one was likely to point out that it hadn't. Or it was the instigator behind the brazenness of a sixteen-year-old schoolboy in Oakland, California, who had seen nothing wrong in planting dozens of sensation tales about western towns in eastern newspapers because, he said, after reading in a magazine that three New York papers published fake stories, "he could not see why he could not do the same thing."[31]

Or it was, according to the reform magazine *Arena*, a particular form of "gutter journalism" practiced by press bureaus that struck bargains with professional men who wanted publicity to lend their names as sources to invented stories of scandals or crime. *Arena*'s definition of "faking" marked a 180-degree turn from Hills's introduction of the term in 1887: "It is perhaps scarcely necessary to explain that 'faking,' in the newspaper sense, means the publication of articles absolutely false, which tend to mislead an ignorant and unsuspecting public." Around the beginning of World War I the socialist Max Sherover was using the term to describe news manufactured or distorted by publicity bureaus, press agents, or what he called the "kept press" to mislead the public and serve the money interests. By then, in fact, the term seemed to be shouldering out simpler, commoner words—*lies*, say, or *fraud*, or maybe even *propaganda*—and to a present-day ear, some of the uses of *fake* sound almost comically inadequate to the tasks it was called on to do—something akin to taunting a murderous thug as "you dirty rat!"[32]

Yet in an age when so many Americans were embracing the transformative power of the *fact*, the word describing its opposite was becoming too evocative, and too useful, not to share widely. By the very end of the nineteenth century the expressive term that the journalists had borrowed from the crooks, the touts, and the troupers had begun creeping for the first time into the general discourse. The particular deceptions, delusions, or frauds that characterized sports, agriculture, art, literature,

medicine, politics, and a range of other fields were increasingly drawn in under the umbrella of "faking." Dairy farmers dismissed tinted margarine as "fake butter." City officials denounced saloons that carried out slapdash renovations to evade liquor laws as "fake hotels." Horticulturists were incensed at the hickory and pignut stock passed off as "fake pecans." Photographers who had routinely referred to conventional retouching techniques as "faking" switched to more innocuous locutions like "handwork" or "working up" after the former term acquired "a general not-to-be-mentioned-in-polite-society air." Works of art were described as fake, as were diagnoses of insanity, claims of streetcar injuries, books, antiquities, boxing matches, hypnotists, advertising, and weather forecasts. President Theodore Roosevelt himself popularized the term "nature fakers" as a gibe at the overly sentimental and unrealistic depictions of wild animals by such popular writers as Ernest Thompson Seton. And in 1896 the city council of St. Paul, Minnesota, passed an ordinance that lumped "faking" with grafting and swindling as practices it intended to "prevent and suppress" through the full majesty of the law.[33]

Although the meaning of the term had by now sprawled far beyond the jolly and relatively innocent sense first intended by Hills, Shuman, and the other journalistic enthusiasts, the roots remained the same. A fake was something whose essential nature had been changed or manipulated or tampered with in some consequential way; it betrayed the interested intervention of a human hand. The difference now in many eyes was that no matter how benign its intent, a manipulation could not possibly offer, as Hills and others had promised, a more appealing, more true-to-life, more *real* glimpse of the world. By definition, there was nothing benign or true or real about a fake.

ANOTHER SIDE OF THE "STORY"

The rising tide of condemnation did not, of course, eradicate from the earth either the extreme or the less egregious forms of journalistic (or other) faking, but it did reflect the increasing urgency of the professionalization project and the drive among responsible journalists to distinguish their work from that of their yellower colleagues. The fissure that opened at the end of the century between the yellow press and the serious press has come to be routinely described as a split between the "information" model and the "story" model, with Adolph Ochs's *New York Times* emerging in 1896 as the premier example of an objective, authoritative, "professionally" produced publication geared to a respectable readership

primarily interested in facts, while the Hearst and Pulitzer papers and their followers appealed to a mass audience by emphasizing entertainment even as they insisted that their entertaining stories were perfectly accurate.[34]

The labels *information* and *story*—a scholar's retrospective shorthand, it should be emphasized, not a contemporary description—do usefully evoke the difference in tone, spirit, and intent between visibly distinct journalistic enterprises. Part of what those emerging "information" papers were doing was learning to describe the world in ways that were different from what ordinary observers did, and part of what that press was doing was learning to *look like* it was describing the world in ways that were different from what ordinary observers did. Professionalization is at bottom a distancing project—an effort to set standards and draw boundaries not just between the trained practitioner who can carry out special tasks and the ordinary person who can't but also between the trained practitioner and the hobbyist, the journeyman, or the quack. Just as doctors differentiated themselves from homeopaths, and lawyers from notaries public, the new breed of professional journalists strove to present themselves as distinct not just from people who weren't writers but also from writers who didn't write *journalism*, at least as they conceived of it. For them, the fake was the necessary counterpoint against which the real could be defined.

Just as the novelists of the new Naturalism—current or former journalists many of them, including Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, and Theodore Dreiser, who later wrote that he had left the *New York World* in part over its propensity for faking despite its public reverence for "accuracy, accuracy, accuracy"—were driven by "a radical desire to suppress the 'literary'" in their effort to transmit rather than mediate real life, so too were the new journalists formulating their own new relationship between style and content.[35] Their intent was to convey to readers that they were receiving pure information—facts that had not been tampered with, facts that had been scientifically observed and dispassionately recorded—rather than an uncontrollable, unaccountable, unpredictable burst from someone's imagination or a fake manipulated by someone's interested intervening hand. The journalists of the "information" papers strove to embody authority, not chumminess; they exuded respectability and discipline, not rakish charm; they promised detached and value-free observation, not skylarking. More and more neutral, straightforward, and scientific was the literary style in these papers; less and less visible, or at least more closely corralled in special sections, were those traditional tall tales, bits

of fiction, jokes, and other non-fact-based items that used to challenge their readers to continually monitor and readjust their assumptions about what was real and what was not. No longer faced with the anxiety (or pleasure?) of having to make those choices for themselves, readers could now, theoretically anyway, sail through one of these newspapers on a sort of authenticity autopilot in the serene confidence that everything in it was equally real. Contrary to Edwin Shuman's aperçu in his handbook for beginning reporters, a newspaper that sounded like a mathematical treatise in fact seemed exactly the right home for the Real Thing.

Yet while at the turn of the century the serious press was at the forefront of the widespread public turn against the "fake," it seemed much less interested in crusading against another bit of "newspaper parlance" that would seem to have posed an equally strong challenge to its accuracy, factuality, and ties to reality. To us present-day news consumers, the fundamental unit of journalistic work has been known for so long and so casually as the *story* that it's hard to step back and ponder how the same word could come to mean "[a]n account or report regarding the facts of an event" as well as "[a] lie," both of which senses appear within the first and primary definition of the word in the latest edition of the *American Heritage College Dictionary*. The label applies to the investigative report about prisoner abuse and the fluff piece about weight loss, to the pandect in *The New Yorker* and the photo spread in *People*. "Get that story!" probably ranks right there with "Stop the presses!" as the hoariest newsroom scene setter in Hollywood.[36]

It took some time, however, for journalists to settle on a term to describe the fundamental unit of the work they produced. The first generations of reporters referred variously to an "article" or an "item" or a "report" or a "despatch" or a "special" (a baggy term that could apply to everything from an important piece written by a "special correspondent" to a Sunday-edition human-interest softball) or even "stuff," which, as one handbook assured the neophyte reporter, was a "technical term" around the newspaper office for "reading matter." Around mid-century the first so-called story papers began to appear, but what the *New York Ledger*, *Frank Leslie's Chimney Corner*, *Fireside Companion*, and their readers meant by *story* was something with a semicolon and a thrill, something along the lines of "The Gun-Maker of Moscow; or, Vladimir the Monk"—it was, in other words, the accepted centuries-old usage referring to a fictional narrative.[37] The term did occasionally show up in the newsroom during those first decades of reportorial work, but rarely in a sense that could have been seen as "technical." A search through the

memoirs of five Civil War correspondents written in 1865 and 1866, for instance, which numbered among the very first *reporters'* autobiographies ever written, turned up a liberal sprinkling of the words *story* or *stories*, but the writers were using them to mean general narratives—explanations, accounts, yarns. *Story* was not widely recognized (or debated) as "newspaper parlance" until around the same time that *fake* came into use; the same 1886 article on "newspaper expressions" that described the faking of Grover Cleveland's wedding trip also noted that "[t]he word 'article' is going out of use, although it is hard to see how it can be dispensed with altogether. The reporter applies 'story' to what he has written, although there may be nothing in it that the outside world esteems as such."[38]

Again like *fake*, the term *story* was bandied about inside the newspaper office with a nudge and a wink, and again journalists worried enough about the connotations it would carry for the uninitiated that they felt compelled to explain that it didn't mean what people thought it did. Professionals protected the term within quotation marks, helpfully included it in glossaries for lay readers, and stopped short in the middle of the page to explain, as Shuman did in his 1894 how-to manual, that "[a] 'story,' by the way, in newspaper parlance, is not simply a bit of romance, but anything written in narrative form, from the account of a royal wedding to a description of the state of the hog market." A writer who signed himself "Ex-City Editor" shared some of the secrets of his trade with the readers of the highbrow *Harper's Weekly*, describing how he would "despatch the reporters to various places, each one assigned to a definite piece of work, or, to use the technical expression of the newspaper world, each one given a definite 'story' to write," and a *World* reporter who published a collection of short stories about newspaper life proved her bona fides in a prefatory note defining some of the "colloquially technical expressions employed in a newspaper office" that she would be using, including both *story* ("almost any article in a newspaper except an editorial one") and *fake* (used if "the facts a story presents exist nowhere else"). And as late as 1914, the *Sun* newsman who took on the task of explaining to the clerical readers of the *Ecclesiastical Review* how to build a relationship with the press paused to clarify an important point:

> It must be stated here that the word "story" as applied in this article is used in its newspaper sense—there is no adequate synonym—as referring to a narrative published or publishable in a newspaper. Reporters, editors, newspaper men generally, refer to anything they write or handle as a "story." They speak of the "murder story in the Times," or the

> "political story." The word "story" carries no intimation of untruth or imagination. . . . When the account is entirely imaginary (what would be termed a short story), reporters refer to it as a "fiction story."[39]

The emphasis on the "technical" nature of so everyday a term, and on its special meaning in "newspaper parlance" (a favorite expression, complete with its almost visible hitch of the suspenders, that abounded in the professional literature), was doubtless a carefully calculated riposte to the wisecrackers and scolds who were, inevitably, inspired by the paradoxical range of meanings in the term. In 1907, for instance, a waggish Arkansas editor looked back on a youthful effort at "a very important and well-written special, or 'story,' as they now call them—and lots of them are *stories*, in truth." Even sharper was the anonymous 1906 screed in the highbrow *Scribner's* magazine that saw the acceptance of the "slang term of 'story'" to describe newspaper content as the perfect symbol of a disturbing trend. The "encroachment of the newspaper on the province of ordinary story-telling," the author of the piece grumbled, "modifies the reading habits" of the general public and encourages it to expect amusing trivialities in everything it sees in print.[40]

Other journalists went so far as to acknowledge a direct connection between the fake and the admittedly guilty pleasures of the "story," but they also hinted broadly that it was all the fault of the public, which *would* insist on liveliness in its reading matter. In fact the "whole secret" behind the ubiquity of the fake, Hills himself argued back in 1887, was "the constant demand for picturesque stories. . . . Descriptive details are expected from the correspondent, and he must do his best to supply the demand." And the columnist who in 1901 wrote with some sympathy about the St. Louis tornado fake remarked that "[t]he very word 'story,' used by newspaper men to describe a reporter's account of an occurrence, lends a certain color to [the] assertion that there is a demand for the art of the fictionist on the part of the papers. A bare recital of facts is not acceptable, except perhaps on a backwoods newspaper, if there are any such. The city daily must employ writers first of all who know how to tell stories."[41]

Despite these occasional sallies, however, the pejorative connotations simply didn't stick to the journalistic "story" with the same tenacity as they did to the journalistic "fake," and in neither the professional nor the popular literature of the time did the "story" inspire the kind of universal opprobrium that the "fake" had come to attract. The term was not widely applied in a dismissive sense, it was not pigeonholed as characteristic of the yellow press alone, and not even the papers that were staking their

identity on their mathematical accuracy and impersonal authority seemed particularly troubled by the emerging convention of referring to realistic portrayals of news events with a term that bore a long, strong connection to the art of fiction. When even Ochs's *New York Times*, the archetype of the new "information" mode, could note casually that a business paper was about to "print a story" about an order of freight cars, or warn its readers that "[i]t is still too early to sift the news stories" about an "appalling fire," the *story* had clearly won general acceptance as a serious journalistic term.[42]

Language churns and changes, associations vary from user to user, and it's hard to know and easy to overanalyze exactly what connotations were drawn from so limber a term by its hearers and speakers a century gone. The word might have slid into the general discourse not because of any subtle cultural commentary it might have expressed but simply because it was handy and comprehensible. Yet it's striking that the term *story* was becoming the term of choice for just about anything published on newsprint at exactly the same time that the new "information" newspapers were staking their claim to greater respectability and authority by avoiding emotion, resisting literary flourishes, renouncing creativity, and exalting the discrete fact—in other words, by sounding as different as possible from the traditional story, that old-fashioned, comfortable, supple device for explaining the world that Charles Tilly has called "one of [humankind's] great social inventions."[43] In the emerging competition between the professional and the mass-entertainment press, the pros may have won on reputation, but their victory came, literally, on their rivals' terms.

In the complex literary world of the turn of the century, where a story paper could be a polar opposite to a newspaper story, where some journalists sounded like novelists *and* the other way around, and where all the old rules and cues governing the relationship between style and content were changing, the efforts of the "fakers" to invent and embellish their way to a more true-to-life portrayal of the real world went too far. What was, perhaps, not yet clear was whether the austere new style of factual and objective journalistic writing could go far enough.

NOTES

1. Richard Watson Gilder, "Certain Tendencies in Current Literature," *New Princeton Review* 4 (July 1887): 4. Useful secondary sources in the large literature on this topic are Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel

Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920* (New York: Harper, 2009), esp. chap. 6; David E. Shi, *Facing Facts: Realism in American Thought and Culture, 1850–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

2. My research into the words *fake* and *story* would have been impossible without the use of a variety of digitization projects and full-text search engines, including Google Books, JSTOR, the Proquest and Readex databases of historic newspapers and periodicals, "Chronicling America" at the Library of Congress, the "Making of America" projects at Cornell and the University of Michigan, and the online archives of *Harper's Weekly*. Like many scholars, however, I have also developed a keen appreciation of how frustrating and perilous these invaluable tools can be. OCR systems often confused *fake* and its derivatives with forms of *sake* or *take*, and it was impossible to search so commonplace and versatile a term as *story* in a consistent way across an array of search engines whose capacity for precision varies so widely. Thus while I am confident that I am accurately describing *trends* in how the words were used, I do not attempt to quantify my findings or indulge in absolutes ("the first," "the most widespread"), which would imply an exactness I cannot defend.
3. Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic, 1978); James W. Carey, "American Journalism On, Before, and After September 11," in *Journalism After September 11*, ed. Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan, 71–90 (London: Routledge, 2002); Karen Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News: New Journalism and Literary Genre in Late Nineteenth-Century American Newspapers and Fiction* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2005).
4. William H. Hills, "Advice to Newspaper Correspondents III: Some Hints on Style," *Writer* 1 (June 1887): 51.
5. Hills, "Advice to Newspaper Correspondents IV: 'Faking,'" *Writer* 1 (November 1887): 154.
6. Hills, "Faking," 154.
7. Hills, "Faking," 155.
8. Hills, "Faking," 155–56.
9. "Newspaper Expressions," *American Bookmaker* 3 (August 1886): 46. Determined to keep the press at arm's length, Grover Cleveland had announced his engagement to his twenty-one-year-old ward just days before the private White House ceremony was held, but undaunted reporters had stalked, besieged, and beset the honeymooning couple with a vigor and a creativity that became legendary.
10. Edwin L. Shuman, *Steps into Journalism: Helps and Hints for Young Writers* (Evanston, IL: Evanston Press, 1894) 122, 123; on his life see s.v. *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* 15: 275–76.
11. John Brisben Walker, "Some Difficulties of Modern Journalism," *Cosmopolitan* 24 (January 1898): 328. See also Ralph Pulitzer, *The Profession of Journalism: Accuracy in the News: An Address before the Pulitzer School of Journalism, Columbia University, New York, Delivered at Earl Hall December 16, 1912* (New York: The World, 1912), 14–15.
12. Charles Edward Russell, *These Shifting Scenes* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), 19–21.
13. Lincoln Steffens, *Autobiography* (Santa Clara: Santa Clara University Press, 2005[1931]), 179; Julius Chambers, *News Hunting on Three Continents* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1921), 7.
14. Russell, *Shifting Scenes*, 19.
15. William Salisbury, *The Career of a Journalist* (New York: Dodge, 1908), 108–9.
16. Theodore Dreiser, *Newspaper Days: An Autobiography*, ed. T. D. Nostwich (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 2000), 166–67, 247–54, 263–65, 285–88.
17. Walker Aken, "A Lesson in Reporting," *Harper's Weekly*, July 4, 1896, 663.
18. On De Quille, see C. Grant Loomis, "The Tall Tales of Dan De Quille," *California Folklore Quarterly* 5 (January 1946): 26–71; see also E. D. Cope to De Quille, on American Naturalist letterhead, Philadelphia, September 18, 1880; and Thomas Donaldson to T. T. Orbiston, on US Centennial Commission letterhead, Philadelphia, March 7, 1876; both in the Dan De Quille Papers, BANC MSS P-G 246, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley. On Mulhatton, see "Western Writer of Fakes," *New York Daily Tribune*, January 13, 1901, B4; and "Joe Mulhatton Dead—Or Joke?" *Chicago Tribune*, December 21, 1913, 6; Salisbury, *Career*, 5–6. On the *Tribune*'s story about the fire, see Andie Tucher, "In Search of Jenkins: Taste, Style, and Credibility in Gilded-Age Journalism," *Journalism History* 27.2 (Summer 2001): 51–52. On the cognitive processes for judging fact and fiction, see Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), esp. 47–54.

19. On journalism and professionalism in general, see Andie Tucher, "Reporting for Duty: The Bohemian Brigade, the Civil War, and the Social Construction of the Reporter," *Book History* 9 (2006): 131–57; Schudson, *Discovering the News*; Schudson and Chris Anderson, "Objectivity, Professionalism, and Truth Seeking in Journalism," in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch, 88–101 (New York: Routledge, 2009); and Stephen A. Banning, "The Professionalization of Journalism: A Nineteenth-Century Beginning," *Journalism History* 24. 4 (Winter 1998/99): 157–63.
20. "Fake, v.2," *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, 1989, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/67778; on the theatrical derivation, John S. Farmer, ed. and comp., *Americanisms Old and New: A Dictionary of Words, Phrases, and Colloqiualisms Peculiar to the United States, British America, the West Indies, &c., &c . . .* (London: Thomas Poulter & Sons, 1889), 232–33.
21. George Grantham Bain, "Newspaper 'Faking,'" *Lippincott's Monthly*, August 1894, 274–75.
22. "The Spectator," *Outlook* 67 (February 23, 1901): 438.
23. Tucher, "Jenkins," 51–52; George William Curtis, "Easy Chair," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 42 (April 1871): 774.
24. Charles M. Sheldon, "The Daily Papers and the Truth," *Outlook* 65 (May 12, 1900): 117.
25. John Arthur, "Reporting, Practical and Theoretical," *Writer* 3 (February 1889): 37.
26. H. R. Shattuck, "Reporters' Ethics," *Writer* 3 (March 1889): 57–58.
27. Hills, "Book Reviews: *Steps Into Journalism*," *Writer* 7 (August 1894): 120–21; for another review chastising Shuman for his comments on faking, see "Briefs on New Books," *Dial* 17.202 (November 16, 1894), 298–99; Edwin Shuman, *Practical Journalism: A Complete Manual of the Best Newspaper Methods* (New York: D. Appleton, 1903), 119.
28. On the Western AP, see for example "Unfounded Political Rumor," *New York Times* (copying the *Rochester Union and Advertiser*), August 30, 1894, 4; "A Fakir Assaulted," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 28, 1895, 3; "'Fake' Story of the Race," *New York Tribune*, September 9, 1895, 2. On the country press, see "Famous Newspaper Fakes," *Washington Post* (copying the *New Orleans Picayune*), August 11, 1907, MS3; on the British press, see "Fake Journalism," *Our Paper* 18 (July 12, 1902): 441; on the other papers that fell for it, see "Baron Mulhatton: The Latest Effort of the Modern Rival of Munchausen—That Big Snake Fake from Kentucky," *Missouri Republican*, March 24, 1888, 3; on the veterans, see Salisbury, *Career*, 111–12.

29. On the yellow papers and the war, see for example "Cartoons and Comments: Yellow Papers Don't Make Yellow People," *Puck* 43 (March 9, 1898): 7; "The Week," *Nation* 66 (May 5, 1898): 334; Elizabeth L. Banks, "American 'Yellow Journalism,'" *Nineteenth Century* 44 (August 1898): 330–32; and "In the Lion's Den," *Land of Sunshine* 7 (November 1897): 251. On McKinley, see "The President's Case and the Newspapers," *JAMA* 37 (September 14, 1901): 705. (By the time this cheery but premature report on the president's recovery saw print, the yellow papers had become, accidentally, correct: he died in great pain that very day.) See also "Journalism," *Consolidated Encyclopedic Library*, ed. Orison Swett Marden (New York: Emerson, 1903), 11:3126.
30. A search with the Google Books Ngram viewer for the frequency of the terms *fake* and *faking* in the American English books in its database that were published between 1850 and 1950 offers a rough corroboration for their increasing popularity in general use at the turn of the century. For *faking*, the line is relatively flat between 1850 and 1890, beginning and ending that segment at about .0000030% with some wavering in between, but then it registers a steep and consistent rise, to about .0000110% in 1910, .0000200% in 1930, and .0000325% in 1950. The line for *fake* is slightly more erratic between 1850 and 1890: it starts at around .0000300%, crests just above .0000400% around 1865, and slumps to just above .0000200% in 1890. It then reverses itself, however, climbing steadily, hitting just above .0000800% in 1910 and holding around .0001800 in the mid-1930s to mid-1940s, before declining gently to just below .0001700% in 1950.
31. "Fake Journalism," *Journalist* 19 (March 17, 1894): 2 (copied from the *New Haven Register*); "Stolen Information: How it is Handled by 'Fake Newspaper Men,'" *Successful American* 4 (September–October 1901): 563–64; "Faked Cable News," *Independent* 61 (November 1, 1906): 1068; "Where Fakes are Made," *Journalist* 31 (December 14, 1901): 101; "High School Lad Stirs Up a Hornet's Nest by 'Fake' Tales," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 15, 1905, 26.
32. J. B. Montgomery-M'Govern, "An Important Phase of Gutter Journalism: Faking," *Arena* 19 (February 1898): 240; Max Sherover, *Fakes in American Journalism* (Buffalo: Buffalo Publishing, 1914), 1.

33. These examples represent just a tiny sampling of usages found in the popular press between 1890 and 1910: on butter, see George Lang Jr., "Comments on Missouri Bulletins," *American Food Journal* 3 (April 15, 1908): 14; on hotels, see "Mr. Raines and His Law," *Nation* 63 (December 10, 1896): 433–34; on pecan stock, see Elizabeth Higgins, "The Lure of the Pecan," *Harper's Weekly* 55 (February 11, 1911): 19; on retouching in photography, see C. H. Claudy, "Working Up a Picture," *Photo Era* 13 (July 1904): 112; on art works, see "Forgeries in Collections," *New York Times*, August 16, 1896 (copying the *Contemporary Review*), 22; on insanity, see "Murderer Fales's Will: A Writing That Suggests Both Lunacy and 'Faking,'" *New York Times*, March 24, 1893, 2; on alleged injuries from streetcar accidents, see Edward Hungerford, "The Business of 'Beating' Street Railway Companies," *Harper's Weekly* 51 (September 14, 1907): 1340; on a faked book, see "Now Who is Mr. Vandam? And is 'The Englishman in Paris' Really a 'Faked' Book?" *New York Times*, October 15 1892, 4; on antiquities, see "Faking Antiquities: How Imitation Treasures of Former Ages Such as Furniture, China, and Pictures Are Made," *Chicago Tribune*, July 12, 1903, A4; on boxing matches, see "Was It A Fake? The Mitchell-La Blanche Fiasco," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 21, 1891, 10; on hypnotists, see "Fake Hypnotists Reap a Harvest: Humbugs Make Easy Livings Out of Dupes," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 21, 1897, 23; on advertising, see L. J. Vance, "Advertising Fakes," *Printers' Ink* 6 (March 30, 1892): 420–21; on forecasting, see F. J. Walz, "Fake Weather Forecasts," *Popular Science Monthly* 67 (October 1905): 503–13. On nature faking, see generally Ralph H. Lutts, *The Nature Fakers: Wildlife, Science and Sentiment* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990). On St. Paul's ordinance, see Hiram David Frankel, comp., *Compiled Ordinances of the City of St. Paul, Minnesota, Corrected and Revised to January 1, 1906* (St. Paul: Review Publishing, 1908), 127. The term *fake book* as applied to music came later, around the 1940s: see Barry Kernfeld, *The Story of Fake Books: Bootlegging Songs to Musicians* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006).
34. Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 88–120; Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News*, 27–47. Other scholars have referred to "hard" vs. "soft," "important" vs. "interesting," or "news" vs. "human interest"; see S. Elizabeth Bird and Robert W. Dardenne, "Myth, Chronicle, and Story: Exploring the Narrative Qualities of News," in *Media, Myths, and Narratives: Television and the Press*, ed. James W. Carey (Newbury Park: Sage, 1988), 68–69.

35. Dreiser, *Newspaper Days*, 644–46; Michael Davitt Bell, *The Problem of American Realism: Studies in the Cultural History of a Literary Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 113.
36. It is, however, striking that the term *story* does not seem to have found a comfortable place in the vocabulary of Internet journalism, where even the sites run by established news organizations are dominated by "clips," "links," "posts," "blogs," "updates," "tweets," and "feeds." Whether the brisk and participatory conventions of digital media are killing the traditional news story itself—the self-contained, single-authored narrative that unfolds at its own pace—is a hotly debated topic well beyond my scope here. (For an entry point into a recent and sprawling outbreak of that debate, see Jeff Jarvis, "The Article as Luxury or By-Product," *Buzzmachine.com*, posted May 28, 2011, http://www.buzzmachine.com/2011/05/28/the-article-as-luxury-or-byproduct.)
37. The first three headings in the *OED*, all of them labeled "obsolete," refer to historical writing; the sense of "a narrative of real or, more usually, fictitious events, designed for the entertainment of the hearer or reader" (heading 5a) dates to the sixteenth century. Under its sixth heading (6e) comes the definition "*orig. U.S.* A narrative or descriptive article in a newspaper; the subject or material for this," though the OED's earliest example, the Ex-City Editor's 1892 *Harper's Weekly* article cited in note 39, appeared a good six years after the term was used in "Newspaper Expressions" (see notes 9 and 38). "Story, n. 1," *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, 1989, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/190981.
38. On *stuff*, see Charles H. Olin, *Journalism: Explains the Workings of a Modern Newspaper Office, and Gives Full Directions for Those Who Desire to Enter the Field of Journalism* (Philadelphia: Penn Publishing, 1910), 187; "Newspaper Expressions," 42. The Civil War memoirs were George Alfred Townsend, *Campaigns of a Non-Combatant, and His Romaunt Abroad During the War* (New York: Blelock, 1866); Albert D. Richardson, *The Secret Service, the Field, the Dungeon, and the Escape* (Hartford: American Publishing, 1865); Junius Henri Browne, *Four Years in Secessia: Adventures Within and Beyond the Union Lines: Embracing a Great Variety of Facts, Incidents, and Romance of the War . . .* (Hartford: O. D. Case, 1865); Thomas W. Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton-Field: Southern Adventure in Time of War; Life with the Union Armies, and Residence on a Louisiana Plantation* (New York: Blelock, 1865); and Charles Carleton Coffin, *Four Years of Fighting: A Volume of Personal Observation with the*

Army and Navy, from the First Battle of Bull Run to the Fall of Richmond (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866).

39. Shuman, *Steps into Journalism*, 7; Ex-City Editor, "Gathering the Local News," *Harper's Weekly* 36 (January 9, 1892): 42; Elizabeth G. Jordan, *Tales of the City Room* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), viii; Horace Foster, "The Priest and the Newspaper," *Ecclesiastical Review* 51 (September 1914): 285–86.
40. Fred W. Allsopp, *Twenty Years in a Newspaper Office* (Little Rock: Central, 1907), 27; "Spectator," 437; "The Point of View: The Newspaper and Fiction," *Scribner's Magazine* 40 (July 1906): 122, 123.
41. Hills, "Faking," 155.
42. "15,000 Freight Cars Ordered," *New York Times*, October 28, 1899, 3; "The Theatre Fire," *New York Times*, January 2, 1904, 8. Equally unperturbed by the paradoxical meaning was Ralph Pulitzer, who on succeeding his father in 1911 continued the *New York World* as an entertaining mass-circulation paper while launching a crusade for journalistic standards. He established a sort of prototype ombuds office "to promote accuracy and fair play, to correct carelessness and to stamp out fakes and fakers," and warned the first class of students at the Columbia Journalism School that the newspaper that "prints a deliberate fake" becomes "a degenerate and perverted monstrosity." But in that same speech he routinely used the term *story* to refer to the contents of his strenuously fake-free paper. Merle Harrold Thorpe, ed., *The Coming Newspaper* (New York: Holt, 1915), 321; Pulitzer, *Profession of Journalism*, 16.
43. Charles Tilly, *Why?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 65.

CHAPTER 5

ELIZABETH JORDAN, "TRUE STORIES OF THE NEWS," AND NEWSPAPER FICTION IN LATE-NINETEENTH-CENTURY JOURNALISM

KAREN ROGGENKAMP

ON FEBRUARY 25, 1947, THE *NEW YORK TIMES* ran a nine-paragraph obituary commemorating the life and accomplishments of journalist, editor, and author Elizabeth Garver Jordan. Noting Jordan's influence at the helm of *Harper's Bazaar* from 1900–1913 and her enduring friendships with Henry James and William Dean Howells, the obituary revealed that Jordan's career began 57 years earlier when she wrote for the *New York World* and its "True Stories of the News" daily articles that "chronicle[d]" the "humorous to the deeply tragic" everyday dramas of New York and "took their author into every phase of the city's life."[1]

The *Times* obituary underscores Jordan's importance in terms of late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century literary production. More specifically, it invites consideration of Jordan's narrative roots in the *New York World* and "True Stories of the News," a series that featured Jordan as principal reporter and that consisted of more than ninety articles printed between November 1890 and May 1891.[2] While the series spanned only a brief period of time, it nevertheless magnifies the finely webbed intersections between journalism and literature at the turn of the twentieth century.[3] "True Stories of the News" introduces a new thread